

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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43

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 241616Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1318

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6585

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:)AEMR, SOPN, US, LE

SUBJECT: PROPOSED ANNOUNCEMENT, PRESS STATEMENT, AND PRESS GUIDANCE
ON SEA DEPARTURE FROM WEST BEIRUT

1. WE PROPOSE TO INSERT FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENT IN BEIRUT PAPERS
APPEARING MORNINGS OF JULY 25 AND 26 UNLESS DEPARTMENT ADVISES
OTHERWISE BY 1500 EDT JULY 24: BEGIN TEXT. NOTICE TO
AMERICAN AND OTHER REGISTRANTS FOR DEPARTURE: SEA TRANSPORT
LEAVING WEST BEIRUT ON JULY 27. CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES
AND THE 30 OTHER COUNTRIES WHO HAVE REGISTERED FOR DEPARTURE
FROM WEST BEIRUT ARE INFORMED THAT SEA TRANSPORT TO ATHENS HAS
BEEN ARRANGED FOR JULY 27. REGISTRANTS MUST ASSEMBLE AND CHECK
IN FOR DEPARTURE BY SHIP FOR ATHENS BETWEEN 7 A.M. AND 8 A.M. ON
TUESDAY, JULY 27, AT THE RIVIERA HOTEL. TRANSPORTATION TO THE
POINT OF EMBARKATION WILL DEPART SHORTLY THEREAFTER. EACH
TRAVELLER MUST HOLD VALID TRAVEL DOCUMENTS. LUGGAGE WILL BE
LIMITED TO TWO SUITCASES PER PERSON. PERSONS WISHING TO DEPART
BUT WHO HAVE NOT YET REGISTERED MAY DO SO BY TELEPHONING OR
VISITING THE CONSULAR SECTION OF THE AMERICAN EMBASSY (TEL. 361800)
ON SUNDAY, JULY 25 OR MONDAY, JULY 26 BETWEEN 9 A.M. AND 5 P.M.
END TEXT.

2. WE REQUEST DEPARTMENT TO ARRANGE BROADCAST OF MAIN
POINTS OF ANNOUNCEMENT ON VOA AND BBC MORNINGS (BEIRUT TIME)
OF JULY 25 AND 26. BRITISH AMBASSADOR HAS READ AND APPROVED
PROPOSED ANNOUNCEMENT.

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3. WE UNDERSTAND THE PLO IS EXTREMELY UPSET BY EVANS/NOVAK

COLUMN RAISING POSSIBILITY THAT PLO MAY BE HOLDING FOREIGNERS IN WEST BEIRUT AS HOSTAGES. IN VIEW OF EXCELLENT COOPERATION WE ARE NOW GETTING ON ARRANGEMENTS FOR SEA DEPARTURE--AND IN INTEREST OF ENSURING ITS CONTINUATION--WE URGE STRONGLY THAT DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN VOLUNTEER STATEMENT ALONG FOLLOWING LINES AFTER READING ABOVE ANNOUNCEMENT AT MONDAY NOON BRIEFING, OR EARLIER IF POSSIBLE. BEGIN TEXT: WE CONTINUE TO HAVE DAILY EXCHANGES WITH ALL THE PARTIES INVOLVED IN MAINTAINING SECURITY IN WEST BEIRUT, INCLUDING, INDIRECTLY, THE PALESTINIANS, TO FACILITATE THE DEPARTURE OF AMERICANS AND OTHER FOREIGNERS. ON THE BASIS OF THESE EXCHANGES, WE HAVE DECIDED TO OPT FOR A DEPARTURE BY SEA, AND WE ARE PLEASED THAT, CONTRARY TO PRESS SPECULATION, ALL THE PARTIES HAVE EXTENDED THEIR FULL COOPERATION TO FACILITATE THIS DEPARTURE. END TEXT.

4. WE FURTHER PROPOSE FOLLOWING PRESS GUIDANCE, WHICH WE WILL USE HERE IN RESPONSE TO PRESS INQUIRIES BEGINNING AT 0200 EDT JULY 25 UNLESS DEPARTMENT ADVISES OTHERWISE:

Q. WHY DID YOU ABANDON THE ROAD CONVOY AND OPT FOR A SEA DEPARTURE?

A. ON THE BASIS OF OUR EXCHANGES WITH THE PARTIES INVOLVED IN MAINTAINING SECURITY, WE DECIDED THAT A SEA DEPARTURE WAS AT THIS TIME THE MOST FEASIBLE WAY TO EVACUATE THE UPWARDS OF 435 WHO HAVE REGISTERED TO LEAVE, AND THE PARTIES HAVE AGREED TO COOPERATE IN FACILITATING THIS DEPARTURE.

Q. BUT PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS AND CONVOYS TRAVEL TO DAMASCUS FROM WEST BEIRUT EVERY DAY. WHY COULDN'T YOU? WAS THERE A POLITICAL OBSTACLE?

A. THE PARTIES INVOLVED IN MAINTAINING SECURITY HAD NOT YET ADVISED THAT THE ROAD WAS TOTALLY SECURE. SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR A CONVOY INVOLVING UPWARDS OF 435 PEOPLE ARE NECESSARILY MORE COMPLEX THAN THOSE THAT MIGHT BE ADEQUATE FOR SMALLER NUMBERS.

Q. WILL NAVAL VESSELS BE USED?

A. UNARMED NAVAL TRANSPORT VESSELS WILL BE USED, AS WAS THE CASE ON JUNE 20.

Q. HOW MANY WILL BE EVACUATED?

A. AROUND 435, OF WHOM 216 ARE AMERICAN CITIZENS AND THEIR NON-AMERICAN DEPENDENTS, WERE REGISTERED AS OF JULY 24, BUT ADDITIONAL PERSONS MAY REGISTER IN RESPONSE TO THE EMBASSY'S NEWSPAPER AND RADIO ANNOUNCEMENTS.

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Q. IS AMBASSADOR SEELYE LEAVING ON THIS OCCASION?

A. THE POSSIBILITY OF RECALLING HIM TO WASHINGTON FOR CONSULTATIONS IS UNDER STUDY, BUT NO DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN. SEELYE

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